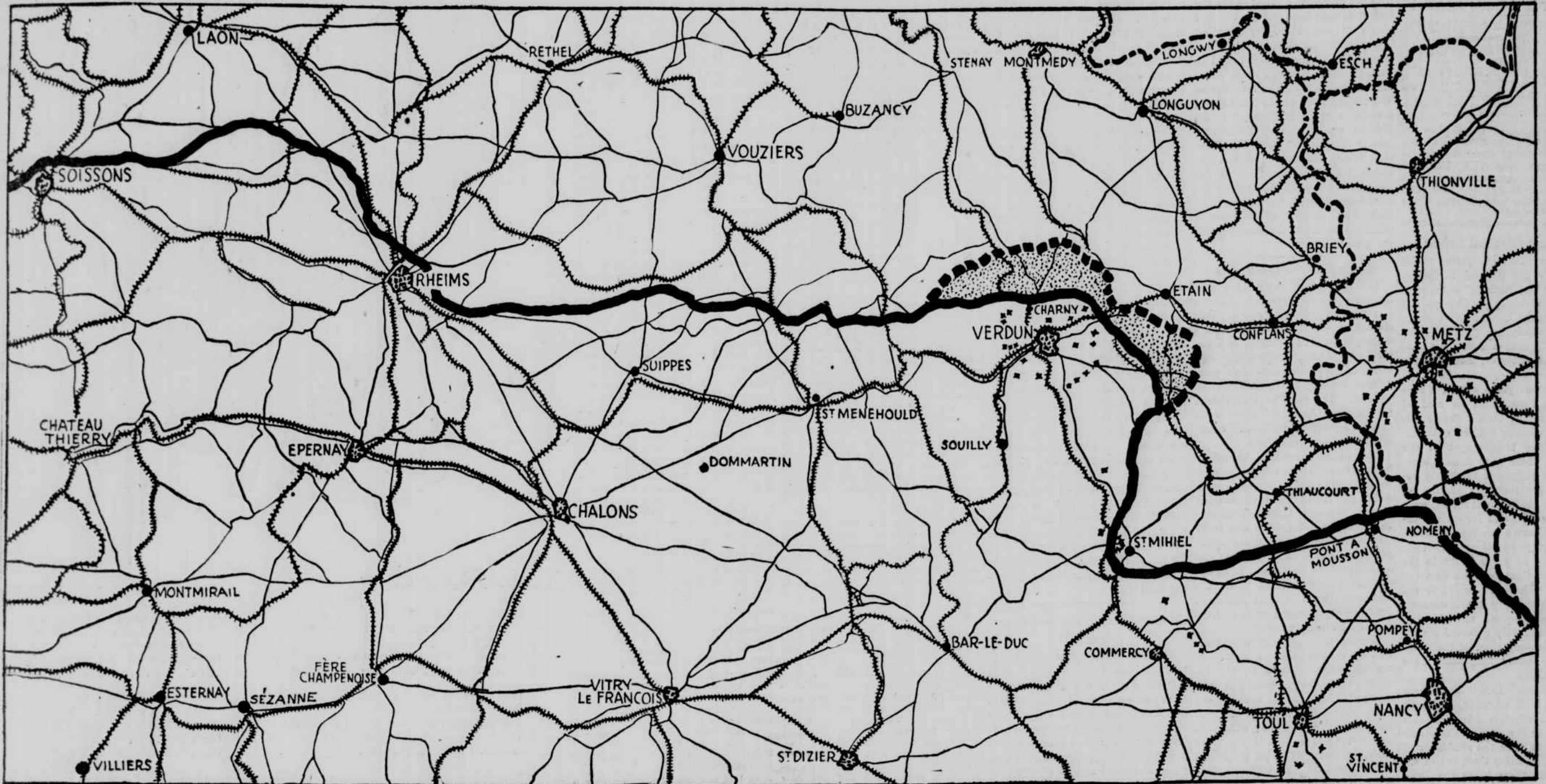


THE END OF THE THIRD ROUND---STILL A DRAW

THE WESTERN FRONT FROM SOISSONS TO NANCY
Shaded portion shows ground gained and still held by Germans about Verdun

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Mid-November marks a period which may well be accepted as the end of the campaign of 1916. It is conceivable, it is even probable, that in the next few months we shall see the extension of several operations now proceeding. We may see the fall of Bapaume and Péronne, we may see the success of the Germans in the south-east and the capture of Bucharest; but these would be at most merely the completion of incidents of the campaign of the current year. Actually, the length of days and the weather conditions must put a term to larger strategic conceptions for the present season.

What, then, shall one say of the third campaign, the third year of the war? To borrow the phrase of the prize ring, the first round, the campaign of 1914, was in the larger sense a triumph for the Allies. Against the German occupation of Belgium and much of Northern France there stood the Russian occupation of an equal amount of Austrian territory, and in the field, the Marne, the battles of Flanders, the battles about Lemberg, were more than a counterbalance to the early German successes in the West and the single decisive victory of Tannenberg, decisive because it saved East Prussia.

The Second Round

But the second round, the campaign of 1915, was even more incontestably a success for the Central Powers. In the West there was the victory before Ypres, signalized by the use of poison gas; there were the successful repulses of Allied attacks in Champagne and Artois, while in the East there was the tremendous battle of the Duna and the invasion of Russia, which carried the troops of Austria and Germany deep into Russia, retreating practically all that had been lost the year before in Galicia and gave Russia Poland to Germany. Finally there was the brilliantly successful drive through Serbia to Bulgaria, which crushed Serbia and bound Constantinople to Berlin. In this category, too, must be reckoned the successful Turkish defence of Gallipoli and the Austrian repulse of Italian attacks at the frontier.

In 1916, however, the advantage has changed again, less decisively perhaps, but hardly less patently. In the larger sense it has been the loss of the initiative by the Germans, which was, to be sure, lost in 1914, but was regained in 1915; it has been the crushing defeat of all but one of the German strategic conceptions, and the only victory of importance has been not against Germany's earlier foes,

but against a new enemy, brought into the conflict by a conviction that the defeat of the Central Powers was not only certain, but imminent—an expensive miscalculation, it would appear.

Let us go back for a moment and examine the situation as Berlin saw it in January, 1916, just about two months before the real campaign of the present year opened. At that moment German High Command reckoned that Russia was out of the war for a long time, as a result of the defeats of the previous year. This was a correct calculation; Russia was out of the war for at least five months. In this time it would be safe for Germany to ignore Russia, as she had chosen to ignore Russia in 1914.

Berlin's Calculation

At the same time Berlin calculated that the British army would be incapable of effective interposition in the West for a long time. This was a correct calculation, also. It was not until July 1 that the British army reached a condition that seemed to the French commander in chief sufficiently good to warrant the opening of a general offensive. Berlin could calculate and did calculate that for a considerable time—half a year, as it turned out, although Berlin both in the case of Britain and of Russia grossly overestimated the time—there would be only France to face an attack, as there had, to all intents and purposes, been only France in 1914.

Further than this, there was the problem of Italy. But the Balkan situation had been cleaned up. Austria had a reserve of troops freed by the destruction of Serbia, Bulgaria could be relied upon with Turkish aid to look after the Sarraïl forces at Salonica for an indefinite period of time. This calculation was wholly sound. Therefore Austria might turn her attention to Italy, crush through the Trentino front and enter the Venetian Plain, taking up the historic position in the Quadrilateral, conquering Venetia and abolishing the Italian peril to Trieste. With such disasters as were thus to be prepared, Italy might be expected to succumb, to break into revolution and disappear from the war.

In sum total, then, Berlin began the campaign of 1916 with two clear objectives: the German effort was to be directed against France with the design to crush France and compel her to make a separate peace; the Austrian effort was to be directed against Italy with a similar purpose. Britain was to be ignored, Rus-

sia to be held lightly; if France and Italy were disposed of, their turn would come.

We know that all of these plans failed. The great German effort at Verdun lasted five months; it cost half a million casualties and it gained nothing important, for the small sections of the actual defences of Verdun which were captured were subsequently relinquished. As for the Italian venture, it terminated about the time the Russian attack in the East began. At the outset it made more progress than the Verdun drive; at the crest of the wave it seemed as if it would realize its main purpose; but now the Italians hold all of the ground they lost on the Trentino front, save a few miles of unimportant territory.

French Strategy

Allied strategy in this time conceived the following plan: French High Command, which dominates the whole Allied strategy, accepted the gauntlet of Germany and undertook to hold off the German flood for the period in which Britain and Russia were necessarily unable to strike. During the better part of five months the heroic task of France was to hold, with the clear understanding that if the holding were successful Russia and Britain would strike as soon as they could get ready.

We perceive how this French conception worked out. First the German attack on Verdun was checked and turned into the bloodiest repulse of the whole war. Then Russia, being at last ready, struck in Volhynia and Galicia, took 400,000 prisoners, an enormous booty of guns and supplies, reconquered more than 10,000 square miles of Austrian territory, including the whole of the Bukovina. This Russian thrust became so menacing that Austria had to recall troops from the Italian front, and no sooner were these troops recalled than Italy reoccupied practically all of the lost territory on the Trentino front and, stepping out along the Isonzo, gathered up Gorizia, advanced materially on the road to Trieste and took a large booty and many thousand prisoners.

The Somme Offensive

Meantime the British, at last being ready, launched their first real offensive in the Somme Valley, aided by the French, who gave the lie to all German claims that France was exhausted by taking as many prisoners and as much ground as Germany had occupied about Verdun. The Somme attack began in July, and in November we still see it progressing with gains, not large, but unmistakable, still being made on a wide front.

The successes of the Russians, the Franco-British forces and the Italians had their effect in Rumania, and Bucharest joins the war. The result is this: A great army, with which the Germans had been preparing to strike Russia and regain the lost ground and prestige of the summer

campaign, is drawn off against Rumania. It wins material victories, it clears Transylvania, partially occupied for a moment by Rumania, while a Turko-Bulgar army under Mackensen sweeps into the Dobrudja and takes Constanza.

Here is the only considerable German success. It wards off a deadly blow in shining fashion. But, if Rumania suffers, Russia profits, and the blow planned against the Russians has been abandoned; the Russian successes in the summer stand. More than this, for the moment, at least, the German Transylvanian army under Falkenhayn is stopped; if it remains checked the net effect will be that Germany and Austria have seen four hundred miles added to the front they must guard with inferior numbers and resources against a foe still increasing in numbers and material.

An American Parallel

Americans can find a good parallel for the Rumanian incident in the following: Suppose that in the second year of the Civil War the North had persuaded Mexico to attack the Confederacy. Suppose that Lee had sent Longstreet to meet the new thrust and he had won a shining victory and driven the Mexicans back over the Rio Grande out of Texas, which they had invaded, and even occupied a portion of the Mexican coast, including Vera Cruz. Such a success would have abolished a new danger; it would have encouraged the South and depressed the North, but it would have weakened the South by just the number of men and the amount of material expended in the successful campaign. It would have still further weakened the South if it remained necessary to leave Longstreet with his troops along the Rio Grande.

The measure of the victory over Rumania is the measure of the danger averted off, so far as the Central Powers are concerned. The measure of the Allied defeat is the extent to which a great opportunity to win a sweeping victory has been lost through mistakes that remain incredible. But it is a foolish thing to reckon that the Rumanian defeat has deprived the Allies of all the profit of Rumanian intervention. It has done nothing of the sort. On the contrary, if Rumania is not entirely conquered, the ultimate profit will be to the Allies, because a new demand will thus be made upon German resources by the opening of a new front which must be permanently manned. In the same way, Russia will have escaped a new blow and will have had time to prepare for a thrust, if one comes later.

Finally, to round out the score, Trebizond and Erzerum in Asia Minor have been captured by the Russians, together with most of Turkish Armenia, and this much more than counterbalances the British

disaster at Kut-el-Amara, which led to the surrender of 10,000 troops, mainly native.

If one is to measure the results upon the map one will say that Russia has taken all of the Bukovina, with much of eastern Galicia, she has taken Czernowitz, Stanislaw, Kolomea, she has retaken in her own territories the fortresses of Lutsk and Dubno, she has lost nothing anywhere, and in Asia she has taken Erzerum and Trebizond.

Allies' Round on Points

France has regained a few square miles of territory only, subtracting the losses before Verdun from the gains in the Somme, but she has beaten off the second great attack which threatened her with destruction. Italy has taken Gorizia and drawn near to Trieste, while repulsing the Trentino drive. Britain has continued her systematic conquest of German East Africa, the last and best of German colonies, now almost completely conquered.

To balance this what has Germany achieved? With Bulgaria and Austria she has overrun the Dobrudja, she has occupied perhaps 5,000 square miles of Rumanian territory and the city of Constanza. With her allies she has repulsed the Allied armies aiming north from Salonica, and the Rumanian armies, which for a few days overran much of Transylvania. Certainly on this statement there is no mistaking the fact that the campaign of 1916 belongs to the Allies on points, to use the prize-ring parlance, always conceding that there has been no knockout and that no knockout is in sight.

Yet the really important thing is not the territory occupied, but the question of human resources. Neither the Russian advance in Galicia nor the Mackensen drive in the Dobrudja can be compared with the effect of other circumstances upon the progress and prospects of the war. The most significant thing about the year 1916 is that it has seen the arrival of Britain, speaking in the military sense.

Human Resources

In the campaign of 1914 the British never had 150,000 in line at one time, and their losses must have been close to 75,000. In the campaign of 1915 the British may have had 500,000, but the troops had very small tactical value, as was proven first at Neuve Chapelle and then at Loos. All through the French operations in Artois the British were unable to render effective aid, and they lacked both guns and munitions all through this time.

But in the campaign of 1916 the British have had upward of 1,500,000 in line, and they have approximately 3,000,000 trained reserves behind them. They have heavy artillery that surpasses both the French and the German and their supply of munitions is rapidly mounting to the point which insures them permanent superior-

ity over the Germans in their front. Moreover, the army which now faces the Germans is not at its highest point of efficiency, despite the fact that German generals have testified to its progress. Not before the campaign of 1917 shall we see the British army at its best.

Beside this development the entrance of Rumania is of small moment, for it added but 800,000 first line troops, with a reserve of about equal numbers behind it. For two years the chief purpose of Allied strategy has been to ward off the German blows in the West until the British could prepare. This purpose has been realized. The British are prepared, they have intervened effectively to take the burden off the French. France has not been destroyed, as Germany expected, before the British could get up, and we have had both at the Somme and before Verdun recent proof of the force that is still left in the French army.

Having thus looked at the Allied view of the third campaign, let us glance at the German calculations. First of all, there is no longer any German dispute about Verdun; that is recognized as a defeat and confessed in the retirement of Falkenhayn. Second, there is a full recognition of the Austrian defeats in Galicia. Such dispute as there is concerns the number of prisoners taken solely; as for the Gorizia victory, the map proves it and there can be no dispute. But the German looks at these things differently.

Germany's Hope

In the German mind Germany is engaged in a defensive war against four great and several minor powers, with Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey as allies. In this war Germany has occupied vast areas as a result of her initial victories. If she can hold these conquered territories she will emerge a winner from the war. So far she has held all but a small fraction and in Rumania she has broken new ground. Actually, Germany, to take the Berlin view, has herself lost nothing in 1916, and her allies have had no serious loss.

Looking westward, Berlin proclaims that after five months the Allies have made only insignificant gains, which, according to British official figures, have cost the British over 400,000 casualties. The German expectation is for a drawn battle henceforth. Germany expects that the Allies will wear themselves out against her defensive lines. She expects that long before her lines break financial exhaustion will overtake her foes. She believes that her substantial success in holding her lines this year points toward the realization of her dream of a peace made on the basis of the map as it stands, which would be a "victorious peace."

At the beginning of the year Germany still hoped for a conquest. That hope died in Galicia and before Verdun. Germany is ready to talk peace on the basis of things as they now are in Europe. She will not talk on any other basis because she believes that things will remain as they are, in the main, until her enemies wear themselves out. She regards the

past campaign as a success because it has not taken from her any essential part of her conquests. She regards it as a success because, a new enemy having appeared, she has been able to defeat this new enemy in brilliant fashion and may conceivably extend her victory to the occupation of most of his territory.

Battle Still a Draw

A comparison of the two points of view must inevitably lead to the conclusion that the third round of the world struggle has been a draw, in so far as the question of a knockout is concerned. Quite as clearly, it seems to me, a decision based upon points must go to the enemies of Germany. But a decision in the matter of points is of merely passing value, since the struggle is described on both sides as a fight to the finish.

Accepting this standard of measurement, it seems to me quite clear that the progress of the campaign of 1916 does not suggest the immediate approach of a knockout. On the German statement of the case it has become a defensive battle, so far as the Central Powers are concerned. But I can see nothing to suggest that this defensive battle will not be maintained in 1917. The delusion that Germany is now falling in man power has been pretty fairly controverted in recent months. We may see, we probably shall see, a shortening of the German lines in the West before the end of the campaign of 1917, but this will not mean any immediate change in the whole situation.

The truth of the thing seems to be this: If Germany can hold the road to Constantinople, if she can keep Russian Poland and Serbia and retain Turkey and Bulgaria in the war as her allies, she will win the war, even if she has ultimately to evacuate Belgium and Northern France and stand on her old frontier. As long as the situation in the Balkans remains as it now is, Germany will control the road to the East, and this is the prize of the war for the Germans. Conversely, there is no apparent prospect of a successful advance from Salonica that will reach the Danube or from Rumania that will arrive at Sofia.

The Campaign of 1918

Unless Germany can persuade Russia to make a separate peace, she will next year be subjected to far greater pressure, much heavier losses in men and probably far greater losses in territory, than she has suffered in 1916. The campaign of 1916 has pretty well demonstrated that German attack in the West is hopeless, but it has not proved that Allied attack in the West will inevitably reach the Rhine. It has abolished all the hopes of an early peace, save among the few Americans who are unable to perceive European conditions as they are and imagine that the people of the nations at war, as contrasted with the governments, are ready to make peace at any price.

Perhaps the thing that the campaign of 1916 most clearly points to is the moral certainty that there will be a campaign of 1918.